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## Motivation of pupils from southern Poland to learn English

### **1 Introduction**

Motivation is one of the most significant factors that influence language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Therefore, it is important to know what motivates different groups of language learners in order to be able to create the most appropriate learning environment for them. Although Poland is one of the largest countries in Central Europe with a sizeable population of English language learners, the Polish context has not been yet widely researched. With the exception of Pawlak's (2012) investigation of the dynamic nature of motivation to study English, the existing studies (Gardner, 2012; Okuniewska et al., 2010; Okuniewski, 2012) employed Gardner's (1985) concept of integrative motivation in spite of the recent criticism of this notion (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Studies from other contexts point to a degree of variation in the levels of language learning motivation, language learning goals, self-constructs and external support enjoyed by language learners (Dörnyei, 2005; Taguchi et al., 2009). There is even variation in the levels of motivation within the same educational context. For instance, Lamb's (2012) comparison of learners from the countryside, provincial towns and metropolitan areas uncovered a rural/urban divide, with rural learners displaying significantly lower levels of motivation than their urban peers. Yet most studies focus on the characteristics of the urban populations of learners (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011). This study employs a mixed methods approach to investigate what motivates Polish pupils aged 15-16 from both rural and urban areas to study English.

## 2 Literature review

Language learning motivation is a multi-dimensional construct. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivation explains why people initiate learning, how long they sustain it for and how much effort they invest in it. The first part of this definition implies that motivation is goal-oriented; thus conceptualisations and research regarding language learning goals will be discussed in this section.

Recently, motivation has been conceptualised in terms of the L2 Motivational Self System, comprising the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and language learning experience shaped by important others such as parents and peers, thus these concepts are reviewed next. Other constructs, such as anxiety, self-efficacy beliefs, self-concept and intrinsic motivation can provide insight into the nature of language learning motivation; therefore they are also included in this literature review. Finally, motivated behaviour and self-regulation, which relate to sustaining learning activities and effort expenditure, are discussed.

Integrative orientation is one of the most frequently researched language learning goals. It implies that the learner studies the language to become similar to members of the target language community (Gardner, 1985). In the Polish context, it has been found to predict effort invested in language learning (Okuniewska et al., 2010; Okuniewski, 2012) and even grades (Gardner, 2012). However, the concept of integrative motivation came under criticism (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Kormos et al., 2008; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) and was subsequently reconceptualised in the form of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005).

Instrumentality is another important goal, first used in Gardner and Lambert's (1972) work to denote motivation stemming from utilitarian benefits of language learning. A high level of instrumental motivation was found among Hungarian learners of English and German (Csizér & Kormos, 2008b) and Polish learners of Hebrew (Okuniewska et al., 2010). Moreover, instrumental motives were more common than intrinsic ones in a sample of dyslexic language learners (Csizér et al., 2010). Finally, Csizér and Kormos (2008a) found a link between instrumentality and the ideal L2 self among secondary school students.

Two other common language learning goals are knowledge orientation and international orientation. The first focuses on the use of a language to obtain broader access to information (Csizér & Kormos, 2009). In previous research, knowledge orientation has been linked to parental encouragement (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011), international posture (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos & Csizér, 2008) and ideal L2 self (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). The second goal, international orientation, refers to the role of English as a tool of communication among people from all around the world. Yashima (2000) called this international posture and claimed that it includes "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners and ... a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures" (2000, p. 57). Although the concept first appeared in relation to Japanese learners of English, its relevance was quickly confirmed in other contexts; for example, Kormos et al.'s (2011) model of the language learning motivation of Chilean learners found a relationship between international posture and knowledge orientation, positive language learning attitudes and

ideal L2 self, whereas Lamb (2012) reported high levels of international posture among young Indonesians.

The L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005) is one of the most important recent frameworks in language learning motivation research. It consists of two self-related factors and the L2 experience. The ideal L2 self is one's possible future self as a successful L2 speaker and has been found to exert a positive influence on language learning motivation in a number of learning contexts, for example in Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2009) and Japan (Ryan, 2009). The ought-to L2 self refers to the qualities that one should possess to avoid negative consequences. This construct appears to influence motivation in Asian contexts, where the instructional context places special emphasis on exams in a foreign language (Taguchi et al., 2009). In the European context, however, it has proved problematic (Csizér and Kormos, 2008a; 2008b; 2009). The last factor, the L2 learning experience, takes into account the immediate influence of the environment in which language learning takes place and has been predictive of the amount of effort invested in language learning in a sample of Hungarian learners of English (Csizér & Kormos, 2009).

Language learning experience is often co-constructed by important members from the learner's community, such as parents and peers (Williams & Burden, 1997). Research findings suggest a positive link between the level of perceived parental encouragement and language learning goals (Gardner et al., 1999; Kormos et al., 2011; Okuniewski, 2012), attitudes (Bartram, 2006a; Gardner et al., 1999; Kormos et al., 2011) and even the amount of effort invested in language learning (Gardner et al., 1999). Moreover, a number of studies

confirmed high levels of parental support for language learning, for example in Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2008a; Csizér et al., 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002) and Indonesia (Lamb, 2012). Meanwhile, the findings regarding the influence of peers on language learning are conflicting. Whereas Kyriacou and Zhu's (2008) results point to a largely limited influence of peers among Chinese senior high school learners of English, Lamb (2012) described peers as playing a positive role in the sample of Indonesian high school learners. Yet both studies reported considerable variation in the experiences of individual learners. Bartram (2006b) further specified that the level of support from peers depended not only on the context but also the language taught. Thus, as the role of peers seems highly contextualized, there is a need for further study in order to understand its significance in language learning motivation.

Other constructs that might also provide invaluable insights into how motivation works include self-efficacy beliefs, self-concept, intrinsic motivation and anxiety. Self-efficacy, in other words, learners' perception of their ability to perform a given task (Bandura, 1997), has been linked to language learning proficiency owing to its motivational force (Hsieh & Kang, 2010). Likewise, self-concept defined by Shavelson et al. (1976, p. 411) as 'a person's perception of himself' is considered to influence motivation (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003), as people who have a positive self-concept in a particular domain are more likely to engage in an action. Yet another important concept is intrinsic motivation, which is "an inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). According to Deci and Ryan (1985) intrinsic motivation is accompanied by positive feelings of enjoyment, competence and self-determination and

subsumes positive language-learning attitudes and interest in language learning previously reported to influence motivation (Csizér & Kormos, 2008a; Ryan, 2009). Finally, anxiety has originally appeared in motivational questionnaires (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). However research shows that unlike motivation, anxiety is negatively related to language achievement (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Rodriguez, 1995) and affects learner's self-concept (Cheng et al., 1999).

Most of the studies from this section used motivated behaviour or motivational intensity as the criterion measure, yet self-regulation might capture the nature of motivation better. In most questionnaires, the motivated behaviour scale includes items that measure “students’ efforts and persistence in learning English” (Kormos et al., 2011) without taking into account the quality of effort. Self-regulation, however, defined as “the degree to which individuals are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process” (Zimmerman, 1989, p. 4) is a self-directive cyclical process consisting of three phases: forethought, which involves planning and setting goals, performance, when the activity is carried out, and self-reflection, in which the selected method is evaluated (Zimmerman, 1998, 2000, 2002). Thus, self-regulating students are proactive in their learning (Zimmerman, 1989), direct their efforts towards the achievement of self-established goals (Zimmerman, 2002) and are able to optimally facilitate their language learning (Riding & Rayner, 1998). This makes them more likely to sustain the activity for a longer period of time and achieve success in language learning than students who do not self-regulate.

As can be seen in this review of literature, the motivation of Polish students to study English as a foreign language has not been thoroughly researched.

Additionally, the studies from other contexts have tended to focus on students from urban areas and affluent backgrounds (Csizér & Kormos, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011), examining factors that are related to students' motivated behavior rather than self-regulation. Therefore, the current study addresses the following questions:

- (1) What are the general motivational characteristics of students from southern Poland?
- (2) Which factors are related to self-regulation of Polish language learners of English?

### **3 Method**

In this study, a mixed-methods design was used to answer the research questions. Qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews, whereas quantitative data was gathered using a motivational questionnaire. The participants of both parts of the study are gymnasium students from Poland who study English as a foreign language. Gymnasium is the second stage of compulsory education following six years of primary school, and it lasts for three years from the ages of 13 to 16. Gymnasiums are non-selective schools, with places allocated based on students' place of living rather than an exam or test of achievement; therefore, all students of the appropriate age attend this type of school. Drawing on other educational systems, gymnasium can be compared to a middle school that serves as a bridge between primary and secondary school



education. At the end of their gymnasium education, students are required to take an exam in a foreign language as well as other school subjects. The results of these exams determine which of several different types of secondary schools they will attend.

### 3.1 Qualitative study

Nine Polish students (4 males and 5 females) from three schools (gymnasiums) participated in an interview. The profiles of the schools were similar in that all of them were compulsory, mixed-sex and non-selective; however, the location of the schools differed as one was located in the city and the other two were located in rural areas. The participants in the interview were aged 15-16 and were successful English learners chosen by their English teachers. The decision to include only successful English learners was influenced by previous research (this author, 2008), in which it was found that learners who are not interested in English and achieve low results tend to provide very short accounts of their language learning experiences and motivation and are, on the whole, not interested in participating in an interview. The names used in following sections are pseudonyms.

The interview questions aimed to cover the most important constructs in language learning motivation research. They were first piloted via Skype with one of the students from the target population. The final interviews, conducted in Polish, lasted 30 minutes on average and took place in a quiet classroom in the participants' school. They concerned the topic of language learning motivation. In the first part, the students answered general questions about their interests and future plans. The students were asked where they studied English (school, language school, private tuition) and what they did to learn it

successfully. This was followed by questions regarding language learning attitudes, interest in language learning, reasons for studying English and their self-efficacy beliefs. The final questions revolved around the influence of important others on studying English (peers, parents). At this stage, the preliminary version of the questionnaire, which students filled in while thinking aloud, was piloted. Their comments were used to improve the wording of existing items to best capture the language learning motivation of the target population, and to create some new items.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher analysed the interview data and identified emerging themes that were later carefully defined and formed the basis of analysis. The categories were: future plans, living abroad, contact with English, reasons for studying English, goals, attitudes to studying English, English self-concept, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, parents, international orientation, knowledge orientation, motivated behaviour, progress, failures, success, tasks, teacher, peers. The researcher subsequently categorized the participants' utterances under these emergent categories. The categorisation was further checked by a colleague to ensure consistency.

### 3.2 Quantitative study

The quantitative part of the study was conducted in September 2010. 236 gymnasium students (121 female, 112 male, 3 missing data) aged 15-16 filled in the questionnaire (Table 1). The participants came from the same 3 state schools located in southern Poland as the interview participants.

Table 1

*Main characteristics of the questionnaire sample*

Location	Gender		
	Female	Male	Missing data
Rural	85	85	1
Urban	36	27	2

The questionnaire contained 103 items and was divided into two parts, eliciting data about motivation as well as background information about the participant. The first part contained items that aimed to measure 12 factors including the ideal L2 self, international orientation, knowledge orientation, instrumentality, peer group pressure, parental encouragement, language learning anxiety, motivated behaviour, self-regulation, self-efficacy beliefs, English self-concept and intrinsic motivation. A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure the extent to which the participants agreed with various statements. Complete questionnaire scales are included in Appendix 1.

Most scales were developed based on already existing ones, and further supplemented with new items. The knowledge orientation, international orientation, ideal L2 self, motivated behaviour, and parental orientation scales were adapted from Csizér and Kormos (2009). Items from scales developed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) were used in motivated behaviour, parental encouragement, peer group pressure, and instrumental orientation scales. The English self-concept scale was previously used by Lau et al. (1992), who adapted it from Marsh's (1990) Academic Self-Description Questionnaire. The items on the anxiety scale were modeled on Horwitz et al.'s (1986) questionnaire on Language Learning Anxiety. Finally, the self-regulation scale contained reformulated items from Tseng et al.'s (2006) vocabulary learning self-regulation scale to fit general language learning purposes. Scales for

intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy were created solely for the purpose of this study. All the questionnaire data obtained was computed and analysed using SPSS 19 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), in particular, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Motivational characteristics of the sample

In order to identify the motivational variables examined by the motivational questionnaire, a factor analysis of the items was carried out. All the operationalized variables emerged as factors, although in a few cases, some items had to be dropped, as they did not measure the variable accurately (Table 2). The reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha ranged from .706 for the motivated behaviour scale to .910 for the self-efficacy scale. These results were adequate to proceed with further analysis.

Table 2

*Reliability analysis and descriptive statistics of motivational scales*

Variable	NFI	Reliability	Eigenvalue	% of VE
Language learning anxiety	6	.843	3.42	56.94
English self-concept	6	.892	3.92	65.25
Ideal L2 self	6	.860	3.53	58.99
Instrumentality	5	.826	2.93	58.61
International orientation	6	.787	2.98	49.60
Intrinsic motivation	9	.824	3.47	43.36
Motivated behaviour	5	.706	2.29	45.86
Parental encouragement	6	.847	3.36	56.00
Knowledge orientation	6	.753	2.71	45.24
Peer pressure	5	.721	2.37	47.47
Self-efficacy	8	.910	4.88	60.94
Self-regulation	8	.809	3.41	42.67

*Note.* NFI = number of final items; VE = variance explained.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of the scales for the population examined. The three scales that showed the highest mean values (just below 4 on a 5-point scale) are knowledge orientation ( $M = 3.89$ ), international orientation ( $M = 3.82$ ) and parental encouragement ( $M = 3.77$ ). Further, the participants obtained average results on the scales of self-efficacy ( $M = 3.32$ ), instrumentality ( $M = 3.24$ ), intrinsic motivation ( $M = 3.23$ ) and the English L2 self ( $M = 3.14$ ). Finally, the students scored less than 3 on 5 scales: motivated behaviour ( $M = 2.99$ ), self-regulation ( $M = 2.95$ ), peer pressure ( $M = 2.91$ ), language learning anxiety ( $M = 2.73$ ), and the ideal L2 self ( $M = 2.72$ ).

Table 3

*Motivational scales sorted by descending mean*

Variable	Mean	SD
Knowledge orientation	3.89	.67
International orientation	3.82	.76
Parental encouragement	3.77	.82
Self-efficacy beliefs	3.32	.88
Instrumentality	3.24	.80
Intrinsic motivation	3.23	.92
English self-concept	3.13	.97
Motivated behaviour	2.99	.74
Self-regulation	2.95	.79
Peer pressure	2.91	.74
Language learning anxiety	2.73	1.02
Ideal L2 self	2.72	.93

*Note.* SD = standard deviation.

In line with these quantitative findings, the participants of the interviews also reported the endorsement of the three language learning goals. For instance, one of the interviewees, Monika, admitted that good proficiency in English is one of the main requirements for obtaining a good education, thus implying knowledge orientation. “I think that the knowledge of English is necessary if you want to stay in education. For example, I’m going to attend a secondary school now and English is a requirement in 50% of schools. You really need to

know it” (Monika). Another goal was expressed by Irek, who said “I study English in order to communicate with foreigners. I do not study every single language, because I can communicate with everybody in English”. Moreover, he also claimed that “English and other foreign languages are necessary to have a career” (Irek).

High levels of parental encouragement reported in the questionnaire are mirrored by the interviewees. An example of this was given by Monika, who said, “My parents say that English is useful and that I will achieve more if I know it, since it is required everywhere. They try to encourage me to study it” (Monika). Furthermore, the interview data provides some clues as to the role parents played in the development of their children’s interest in language learning. Gosia reported, “They (my parents) want me to study English. When they first enrolled me in a language school, it was them who made the decision because I didn’t like studying English at first as it was hard in the first grade” (Gosia). A similar comment was made by Ania, who claimed that her mother motivated her to take up additional English classes and, as a result, she caught up with her peers and started enjoying language learning.

On the other hand, the influence of the other significant group, peers, seems to be rather weak as suggested by the mean score ( $M = 2.91$ ). Even motivated students have mixed feelings about their peers’ influence on language learning, like Kasia, who reported:

There are some people who think that because I know English this means that I do nothing at home but cram. I don’t pay any attention to it. I don’t take to heart what they say. My friends accept that I know English and have no problems with that.

Furthermore, Ania claims that even the same peers might send contradictory messages about the importance of their peers' proficiency in English. "My peers sometimes say that I'm a crammer and question why I study English so much, but if they need any help, they always come to me" (Ania).

The interviews with motivated learners seem to show that, unlike the hypothetical 'average' language learners, they consider themselves fully capable of studying English and they realize they are good at it. Kasia comments 'For me, it (English) is easy, I may have a gift' and adds later 'I like this subject (English) because I am good at it'. Piotrek is more specific and clarifies that "some things are easy but you need to work a bit on some others to be able to remember them" and later adds that, "there are more things that are easy".

The students scored 3.23 out of 5 on the scale of intrinsic motivation, which suggests that the interest and enjoyment they derived from studying English is limited. Once again, the levels of standard deviation point to differences between individual students. The interview data also seems to confirm that the successful students tend to be interested in language learning and enjoy the process. Ania claims that she studies English because it is compulsory; however, she stresses, "if it wasn't, I would also study it... I'm also interested in it and I will be studying it even if it's not at school anymore".

#### **4.2 Motivational variables that predict self-regulation**

Standard multiple regression analysis was used to assess which variables contributed most to self-regulation. The preliminary analyses confirmed that there were no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity and

homoscedasticity. The assumption of multicollinearity was violated in the case of the language learning anxiety variable. Therefore, the variable was removed from further regression analysis. Three scales were found to significantly contribute to observed variation in self-regulation: motivated behaviour, intrinsic motivation, and the ideal L2 self (Table 4).

Table 4

*Predictors of self-regulated behaviour*

Model	B	SE B	$\beta$
1 Motivated behaviour	.39	.06	.38**
2 Intrinsic motivation	.27	.08	.29**
3 Ideal L2 self	.16	.07	.19*
4 Instrumentality	-.10	.07	-.11
5 Knowledge orientation	.06	.08	.05
6 Self-efficacy beliefs	.06	.07	.07
7 International orientation	.06	.08	.06
8 Parental encouragement	.05	.05	.05
9 English self-concept	.03	.06	.04
10 Peer pressure	.02	.06	.02
R <sup>2</sup>		.69	
F for change in R <sup>2</sup>		30.18*	

Note. SE = standard error.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Similarly, the interviews suggest that there is a link between self-regulation and intrinsic motivation as all the interviewees mentioned how much they enjoy studying English and, at the same time, they discussed their effort and the self-



regulatory strategies that they use. For example, Magda, who claims that she likes English classes and is interested in English, mentioned that she always studies at 7 p.m. as there is nothing on TV that could distract her. If she does not understand something, she asks the teacher or, if she is at home, she goes online to look it up. She has a routine in place to prepare for the test and puts her English into practice by reading books and online magazines.

## **5. Discussion of the results**

### **5.1 Language learning goals endorsed by language learners**

The results of the motivational questionnaire and interviews suggest that Polish learners endorse three language learning goals; namely knowledge orientation, international orientation and, to a lesser extent, instrumentality. A high mean on the knowledge orientation scale seems to highlight the positive attitudes of Polish pupils towards English as an international language that facilitates access to information. Similar findings have been previously reported in other contexts such as Hungary (Kormos & Csizér, 2008) and Chile (Kormos et al., 2011). High levels of knowledge orientation can be explained by the widening importance of the Internet as a source of information. Bilingual English speakers have access to a larger range of resources than their monolingual counterparts when they are using the Internet. On the same note, the results seem to stress the role of English as a lingua franca of today's world that enables Polish learners to communicate not only with a particular group of native speakers but rather with the international community of English speakers (Jenkins, 1998). Therefore, Yashima's (2000) concept of International Posture can be applied to the Polish context as teenagers as young as fifteen realize the necessity of studying English

in order to communicate with foreigners. The importance of international orientation as a goal that drives learners' motivation has also been recognized in a number of previous studies (Kormos et al., 2011; Kormos & Kiddle, 2013; Pawlak, 2012).

The mean score of 3.24 on the instrumentality scale suggests that not all the participants consider that English will aid them on the job market. This result differs from the findings reported in studies of Hungarian students' motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2002; Csizér & Kormos, 2008a) and is somewhat surprising considering the recent wave of immigrants from Poland in countries such as the UK and Ireland after the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 (ONS, 2010). This could be linked to the fact that Poland is a large, monolingual country and the number of Polish native speakers is much higher than the number of Hungarian native speakers (Lewis, 2009). Thus, the relative vitality of Polish can affect language practices in many companies operating in Poland, as they might primarily need employees to cater for the needs of the domestic market, rather than the foreign ones. As a result, the language requirement might not be as ubiquitous as in smaller countries such as Hungary. In fact, only 7.2% participants reported that their mothers speak English at a communicative level and the figure is only slightly higher (11.1%) for fathers. Moreover, as Polish is spoken by a vast majority of people, contact with English is largely limited to the classroom and trips abroad, which not everybody might be able to afford. In the interviews, only 4 out of 9 students reported that they had direct contact with an English speaker in Poland (apart from in the classroom). Furthermore, this encounter was the only experience of that kind for the students. More students reported communicating in English

when travelling abroad (7 out of 9). Nevertheless, the fact that the use of English is largely limited to the classroom might have an impact on the students' perceptions of its usefulness on the job market.

## **5.2 The role of parents and peers in motivating students**

The results of the questionnaire and the interviews suggest that Polish learners of English are supported by the parents in their efforts to study English. The high scores on the parental encouragement scale are in line with Csizér and Kormos' (2008a) findings and suggest that parents actively try to encourage their teenage children to study English as they view it as an important part of education. Moreover, the interviewees' comments suggest that the role of parents is particularly relevant in the initial stages of language learning as parents are the motors which initiate the process by providing their children with the opportunity to join language classes. Despite this, parental encouragement has not been found to be directly related to self-regulation in the quantitative phase of the study. This could be due to the fact that the questionnaire data was collected long after most of the students began to study English (161 students had studied English for more than 6 years at that point and further 61 had studied it for between 3 and 6 years, while only 8 reported having studied English for less than 3 years). Therefore, it seems that parents' role is not as vital in the later stages of language education as it is in the initial stages, which confirms that their influence on language learning is rather weak (Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008).

The mean score on the peer group pressure scale suggests an overall weak influence of peers on language learning, a conclusion that has been previously

drawn by Kyriacou and Zhu (2008), who found that peers had little impact on language learning. The interviewees provide more details and explanation as to why this is the case. Whereas some peers might not consider studying English as ‘cool’, for others it is not an issue. Moreover, peers might deride motivated students in some situations, but this does not stop them from seeking help from the same students if necessary. This might lead to the conclusion that whether their classmates put effort into studying English or not is not of great importance for teenagers as long as the student is cooperative. Furthermore, such situations show that peers appear to send highly conflicting messages about their view of English as some teenagers seem to frown upon studying English, while simultaneously acknowledging that proficiency in it is important and useful by asking their fellow students for help. All these factors might contribute to the low influence of peer pressure on language learning motivation.

### **5.3 The influence of self-constructs and anxiety on language learning**

The mean values on the self-efficacy and the English L2 self scales (see Table 2) imply that the students believe they have a certain amount of skill necessary to master English and, at the same time, they do not consider their abilities to be considerably better or worse than their friends. Yet the interviews with motivated learners reveal that their English L2 self tends to be higher than the overall mean suggested by the questionnaire. This seems to be in line with Bandura’s (1997) theory of self-efficacy beliefs, according to which positive self-evaluations determine choice of action, spur effort investment and

persistence, the elements that constitute Dörnyei's (2001) tripartite definition of motivation.

The low score obtained on the ideal L2 self scale might suggest that most of the participants might not have an available vision of themselves as a successful English speaker. The relatively low score on this scale could be also attributed to the age of participants, as Carlson (1965) suggests that in adolescence self-image undergoes substantial changes, which might negatively affect their ideal L2 selves. However, a close examination of the standard deviation values (.93) might suggest that there is a group of students who have developed their own ideal L2 self and endorse it. In fact, 53 students in the sample scored 3.5 and over, which confirms this hypothesis. The current result is considerably lower than the means reported by Kormos and Csizér (2008) in their sample of Hungarian learners of English. The difference might stem from the fact that the Hungarian sample was entirely made up of students from the metropolitan areas of Budapest, whereas the participants of this study came from diverse locations ranging from small villages to cities. Additionally, the Hungarian sample included a school from the private sector, while in the current sample, only state schools were represented. Lamb (2012) found that students from rural areas tend to have lower scores on the motivational scales than their counterparts from cities. He claimed that rural areas tended to be populated by families with lower socio-economic status than families in the city. The Chilean study by Kormos and Kiddle (2013) confirmed a relationship between the scores on the ideal L2 self scale and social class, in that learners from lower social classes tend to have lower scores than their counterparts from the higher social classes. Thus, it seems likely that the

concept of ideal L2 self can be affected by external factors such as location or socio-economic status.

The participants did not seem to experience high levels of anxiety in the language classroom, which could be considered beneficial for language learning, as increased levels of anxiety might lead to lower ultimate achievement (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Rodriguez, 1995) and negatively affect the self-concept (Cheng et al., 1999). Despite this, the students do not appear to put too much effort into language learning as suggested by the scores on motivated behaviour ( $M = 2.99$ ) and self-regulation ( $M = 2.95$ ). Yet, it is worth noticing that there was some degree of variation between students as suggested by relatively high standard deviations on these two scales (see Table 3).

#### 5.4 Factors related to self-regulation of Polish students

The results of the regression analysis suggest that self-regulation is closely related to three other scales, namely motivated behavior, intrinsic motivation and the ideal L2 self. The strong relationship between motivated behavior and self-regulated behavior could be based on the partial similarity of the scales. As explained in the Literature Review section, the motivated behaviour scale included items that describe what is involved in studying a foreign language when enrolled in a language course. The items were general and did not go into detail regarding what was involved in the process of studying English. The self-regulation scale also contained a number of items that described language learning behaviours. Unlike the motivated behaviour scale, however, the items pointed to much more specific behaviours such as creating the appropriate

learning environment or employing the most efficient methods to achieve the best results. On the whole, both scales addressed learning behaviours, which explains the direct link between them.

The results of the regression analysis, in particular the one pointing to the intrinsic motivation scale as one of the best predictors of self-regulation, suggest that the students who derive pleasure and satisfaction and are interested in studying English are more motivated to engage in the process of language learning. It seems, then, that the instant intrinsic reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985) that the learners experience is important when deciding whether to initiate the learning activity, and affects whether the learner can sustain it in order to achieve their ultimate goal. Furthermore, close scrutiny of the definition of intrinsic motivation might provide another explanation for the link between the scales of intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. Intrinsic motivation presupposes enjoyment and excitement towards its object (Deci & Ryan, 1985), both of which are at the core of language learning attitude scales. Attitudes have been assumed to directly influence the intention to perform an action (Ajzen, 2005). There is also strong evidence that language learning attitudes influence motivation to learn a foreign language. Ryan (2009) reported that attitudes towards language learning were the best predictors of motivated learning behaviour. Likewise, Csizér and Kormos (2008a) found that this variable predicted motivated behaviour of non-elite secondary school students best. It seems that students who enjoy language learning are more likely to be engaged in the process and tend to work harder to achieve their target proficiency.

Ideal L2 self was also found to predict the self-regulation of language learning among Polish gymnasium students, which confirms its important role in motivating students. This finding is consistent with previous studies that linked ideal L2 self to the amount of effort invested in language learning (Al-Shehri, 2009; Csizér & Kormos, 2008b; 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009). It seems that the endorsing of the vision of oneself as a proficient speaker of English is related to the amount and quality of effort invested in language learning. In line with Markus and Ruvolo (1989), merely having an ideal self in a given domain marks it as important. Therefore, the students who find studying English important will be likely to create a vision of what they want to achieve; thus, constructing their ideal L2 self.

## 6 Conclusion

This mixed-method study aimed to examine the general motivational characteristics of Polish students and investigated which of them are related to self-regulation. Similarly to Hungarian teenagers, Polish participants seemed to endorse the goals of knowledge and international orientation (Csizér & Kormos, 2009). Additionally, they found English useful to some extent on the job market. Parents appeared to be encouraging and played a positive role in the initiation of motivation, which is consistent with findings from other contexts such as Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2008a) and Indonesia (Lamb, 2012). The influence of peers was largely restricted, although the interview data revealed considerable variation, previously reported by Kyriacou and Zhu (2008) and Lamb (2012). Furthermore, the students seemed to score moderately on the self-efficacy beliefs scale and the English self-concept scale,



while their results were much lower on the ideal L2 self scale. This latter set of results was substantially lower than the means obtained from secondary school learners from the capital city of Hungary (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). In spite of low levels of anxiety, the students in the current study reported limited enjoyment of studying English and invested less effort in studying English than Hungarian learners (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). This was different for the interview participants, all of whom previously identified as successful language learners, as their motivational characteristics were much more positive than the means obtained in the questionnaire study. The results of regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation, motivated behavior and the ideal L2 self are the best predictors of self-regulation in the investigated population. These findings are consistent with Csizér and Kormos (2009), who previously linked the ideal L2 self and criterion measure, and Kormos et al. (2011), who showed a relationship between the antecedent of intrinsic motivation, language learning attitudes, and the criterion measure.

This research highlights that self-regulated language learning occurs when students enjoy the language learning process and have positive images of themselves as English learners. Therefore, language teachers should strive to create a language learning environment that gives students the opportunity to develop positive L2 selves and enables students to enjoy the process of language learning. Similarly, learners would benefit from being made aware of the potential importance of English on the job market, not only abroad but also in Poland. Finally, as parents seem to play a crucial role in nurturing motivation in the early stages of language learning, they need to be aware of

their potential role in order to be able to boost young learners' motivation to pursue foreign language studies.

The study presented in this paper has some limitations. The sample in this study included 236 students from one area of Poland. A higher number of participants could be useful in order to generalize the results to the wider population. Similarly, the inclusion of participants from other areas could provide a somewhat different picture of language learning motivation, as it would take into account regions that are more developed in terms of tourism, as well as heavily urbanized areas. The motivation of students living close to the borders, where there is frequent contact with foreigners (not necessarily speaking English) might also differ from the motivation of pupils who live in the central parts of the country. Finally, more students from rural areas than from urban areas participated in this study. Future research could include a balanced number of students from different areas to obtain more accurate insight into the English language learning motivation of Polish pupils.

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## **Appendix 1: Motivational Questionnaire**

### **Ideal L2 self**

- When I imagine my future job, I see myself using English.
- I often imagine myself speaking English fluently.
- I imagine myself communicating in English abroad.
- I often imagine myself writing emails in English.
- I often imagine myself reading books and articles in English.
- I often imagine myself watching TV and films in English.

### **International orientation**

- If I could speak English well, I could get to know more people from all over the world.
- Studying English will help me understand different people from all over the world.
- In the future, I would really like to communicate with foreigners.
- Speaking English is important to be able to work with people from other countries.
- Studying English will help me feel part of the international community of people speaking English.

### **Self-efficacy beliefs**

- I am certain that I will be able to use English successfully in my future job.
- I am certain that I will be able to get my ideas across clearly when speaking English.
- I am certain that I will be able to communicate in English.
- I am certain that I will be able to watch television and films in English.
- I am certain that I will be able to understand a conversation in English.
- I am certain that I will be able to write emails and letters in English.
- I am certain that I will be able to get my ideas across when writing in English.
- I am certain that I will be able to read books and newspapers in English.

## **Instrumentality**

- The things I want to do in the future require me to use English.
- I study English because it will facilitate a job hunt.
- I study English because it will be necessary to work worldwide.
- I study English because I would like to spend some time abroad.
- I need English for my future career.
- I study English as it will help me to earn good money.
- I study English as it is necessary to pass my exams.

## **Intrinsic motivation**

- I would like to master English.
- I am curious about how people communicate in English.
- I am interested in English.
- I study English because I'd really like to be good at it.
- Solving a task in English makes me feel good.
- I find learning English enjoyable.
- When I learn something new in English, I feel happy and satisfied.
- I am curious to find out the meanings of new words in English.
- I am happy when I see that I am making progress in English.
- I like solving challenging tasks in English.

## **Motivated behaviour**

- When studying English, I try to do job with my best effort.
- When I study English, I seldom do more than is necessary.
- To be honest, I often skimp on my English homework.
- I don't bother checking my assignments when I get them back from my English teacher.
- I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.
- I put off my English homework as much as possible.
- I really work hard to learn English.

## **Parental Encouragement**

- My parents consider English an important subject.

- My parents encourage me to attend additional classes of English.
- My parents encourage me to study English.
- My parents think I need to know English to be well-educated.
- My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.
- My parents have stressed the importance English will have for me when I leave school.
- My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as possible.

### **Language learning anxiety**

- I tremble when I know I'm going to be called on in language class.
- Even if I'm well prepared for the class, I feel anxious about it.
- In language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.
- I worry about the consequences of failing tests, assignments and exams in English.
- It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
- I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
- I'm afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak English.
- I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

### **Self-regulation**

- If there is something I don't understand in English, I do my best to find the answer in a variety of resources (coursebooks, dictionaries, online resources).
- If I can't understand something in the English class, I ask others (my English teacher, friends etc.) for help.
- I try to find opportunities to practise my English.
- I try to prepare for every English lesson, even if I know that I won't be tested.
- I try to learn English by watching films in English and listening to music in English.
- I have my own ways of studying English vocabulary.

- I plan my preparation and reviews before the test.
- I have my own special techniques to make even the most boring activities more interesting.
- When studying English, I arrange my environment to make learning more efficient.
- I use my own techniques to keep me focused on studying English.
- When studying English, I arrange my environment so that to avoid possible distractions (TV, the Internet, mobile phone).
- I study English as long as it takes me to achieve my own goals.

### **Peer Pressure**

- My friends think that studying English is important. S
- For my friends, studying English is a sign of being well-educated.
- My friends think English is cool.
- My friends encourage me to learn English..
- My friends think that studying English is cramming.
- My friends are not bothered to study English.
- My friends have positive impact on my studying English.

### **English self-concept**

- Compared to other students I'm good at English.
- I'm hopeless when it comes to English.
- I have always done well in English.
- Studying English comes easy to me.
- I usually get good marks in English.
- I learn new things quickly in English.
- I'm better at English than most of my classmates.
- I am satisfied with how well I do in English.

### **Knowledge orientation**

- For me to be an educated person I should be able to speak English.
- I think in today's world English is a very important means to get information.

- You can find more information about almost every subject if you know English. Without knowing English, it is difficult to find information.
- I think that English is an important school subject.
- A knowledge of English would help me get a better education.